

# Pest Update (January 20-27, 2010)

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## Available on the net at:

<http://www.state.sd.us/doa/Forestry/educational-information/Pest-Alert-Archives.htm>.

Any treatment recommendations, including those identifying specific pesticides, are for the convenience of the reader. Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally those that are most commonly available to the public in South Dakota and the inclusion of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions and the label is the final authority for a product's use on a particular pest or plant. Products requiring a commercial pesticide license are occasionally mentioned if there are limited options available. These products will be identified as such but it is the reader's responsibility to determine if they can legally apply any product identified in this publication.

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**The icing that is raising havoc with drivers is also causing some concern for tree owners.** Trees, particularly evergreens, are bending and breaking under the heavy ice loading. There is also the addition problem of some shrubs breaking under the heavy snows that blanketed much of the state several weeks ago. If a tree is still standing but has broken branches or is split, here are a couple of suggestions for treating these problems.

**What to do with young trees that bend under the weight of ice.** A common reaction is to go out and try to knock off the ice to reduce the weight. Do not do this! Knocking the ice free can result in branch breakage and further damage to the tree. Generally it is best to allow the ice to melt and the tree to slowly resume its natural shape. Many times these trees will recover their natural shape and

resume normal growth by spring. Young trees such as birches and cottonwoods have very flexible stems and can easily recover from the bending. If the young tree appears so bent that it may break then provide temporary support by use of 2x4s as props. *Gently* pull up the stem or branch to be supported and place the board beneath it. I usually recommend cutting the top of the prop into a 'v' or 'u' to hold the trunk or branch and remember you are not trying to restore the tree to its pre-ice position but just providing a little support to keep it from bending further.

The bending of the branches and trunk is a stress, even when the tree does return to its natural shape. **The bending results in internal damage and we often see these same trees attacked the following growing season by opportunistic insects, such as borers, that are able to exploit the weakened trees.** Young ash, birch and cottonwoods that experienced severe twisting during this ice storm may be protected by treating the trees for borers this next spring. Pesticides that are either sprayed on the bark to kill the adult insects that are laying eggs or injected into the tree to kill the larvae after they hatch may be a valuable means of reducing the potential threat of infestation during the coming growing season.



**Broken branches should have the pruned cleanly back to where they are attached to a larger branch or the trunk.** The pruning cut should not be made flush to the branch or trunk but instead follow the collar, the swollen area to which the branch is attached. The cut should begin just outside of the branch bark ridge – the ridge of bark that forms where the branch and trunk meet – and proceed down at about an opposite, but

similar, angle to the ridge as showing in this photograph. There is no need to paint these cut or apply any other type of wound dressing. While the pruning should be completed as soon as possible there is little additional risk to the tree by waiting for a few days until it is safer to work in these ice-coated trees. Any work that involves pruning off the ground should be left to professional arborists as these individuals have the training and equipment to work safely at heights.



There are also numerous trees that had forked stems and now are split to the ground. These double leaders, or codominant stems were weakly attached and they often are the site for splits to occur when the tree experiences heavy snow or wind loading. Some tree owners have attempted to pull the two stems together and then hold them in place with clamps, cables or ropes wrapped around each trunk and tied

together. **Do not do this!** While the tree may survive for many years supported in this way, eventually the hardware will girdle the expanding trunks and either the top of the tree above the wrap will die or snap off. Usually if a tree is split open it is best to remove the tree. There are times that such trees can be repaired through the use of tree support systems but the decision whether these systems can adequately support the tree, and the installation of such systems, should only be done by a qualified arborist.



Evergreens that are buried by the snow are probably best left as they are. Attempting to dig them out may do more harm than good.